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000 of the milkmen began at once to retrace the long uphill journey from the city's outskirts to the village.

● 576 Sometimes I overtook these men outside the village and fell in with them.[1] *"Dobra stiga"* ("Well-reached"), I said; and they answered, *"Dal ti bog dobro"* ("God has given you good"). The [822] amenities observed, I then asked about other matters. "How far is it from Sofia to your village?" Always the answer came in terms of "walking hours" and never in kilometers, the accepted measure of distance in Bulgaria. When we would encounter those going in the opposite direction we stopped our conversation long enough to say, *"Dobra sreshta"* ("Well-met"). When I chanced to inquire about the size of Dragalevtsy, the usual answer was, "About three [161] hundred houses." If I wanted to know how many inhabitants this would mean, I multiplied the figure by five, the size of the average household. (The difference between this crude estimate of fifteen hundred and the 1934 census figures of 1,669 persons meant little to the peasant.)

000 No, Dragalevtsy was in no sense of the word a large village, as Sofia savants used to point out to me when they asked where I saw material enough there for a book. Theirs was the loss. An old village with more than sixteen hundred people teems with life. The stuff of which its days are made is rich and lasting; the intricate crisscross of vigorous personalities and deep-rooted folkways proved a never-ending drama for which nature usually provided a superb setting.

788 The meadows were lush from the spring rains, some of the fruit
181 trees were in bloom, numberless tiny silver streams spread a glittering net down the side of Vitosha, and a veil of green leaves lay over all the red roofs of the village. Against such a background, a group of peasants made ready for their pilgrimage to Rila Monastery. Such an occasion was as truly an outpouring of joy as was the departure of the Canterbury pilgrims in Chaucer's day. The clanging of the church bell summoned the friends and relatives of the departing pilgrims to the incense-filled church. Inside, before the iconostas, dark and gilt, the priest read a prayer and led the little flock of people to the edge of the village, to the beginning of the outside world, where the

[1] [i.e. milkman delivering their milk to Sofia -- Analyst]

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palatable to peasant taste. If the bread supply gave out at the table, the diners sat calmly without eating until the new loaf was brought in, for it was almost impossible for them to eat unless holding a piece of bread in the left hand. Dunking was the approved method of disposing of the juice of a stew. When eating, one was apt to get a greasy coating on the lip; the accepted technique was to scrape this off with a piece of bread already on its way into the mouth. Forks and small spoons were used only when there were guests. But why should table manners not be simple and direct?

"Knives for everybody are not used. There is one knife at the table, but people use their hands, for we peasants say, 'For what did God give the fingers to man if he does not use them to feed himself?' "

As for the preparation of the food:

"Usually it is the duty of the oldest woman in the family to prepare the food, because she knows the best how to cook and she can cook most deliciously of all. In case she is sick, then her daughter-in-law or her daughter cooks. If there are not such, then the man cooks." Here my informant sniffed and added scornfully, "Of course, in such a case dry food is eaten chiefly, but even the men can cook at least some of the dishes."

I asked another woman who really "knew her place," as a Dragalevtsy man would say, whether men could cook:

"Of course, men can do everything woman does, but woman cannot do everything men do. Who cooks for those men that are shepherds or work in the forests but they themselves? Men do not need women half as much as women need men. Yet we all recognize that cooking is for the women, not for the men."

No matter what time of day I entered a village home the *domakinya* (housewife) with unfailing and genuine hospitality offered me food or drink. I began to wonder when the people had their regular meals and found that some homes had no regular mealtimes; instead, people got up and took a piece of bread or anything else available whenever they were hungry. In most families, however, about nine o'clock in the morning a meal called *ruchok* was served to all; at about two, dinner was served, and two hours after sunset the people gathered for supper. One villager put it this way:

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the shoulder. In late July harvesters came from other villages to help at least one-third of the families (the others harvested their own grain) to cut the grain with sickles and place the stalks in little piles. An old man, expert through years of practice, then made up the sheaves by tying together a bundle of stalks with the longest stalks taken from a previous sheaf. He used a round, pointed stick about fourteen inches long to make the grain compact and to tie the knot ingeniously.

Most of the grain was threshed by the hoofs of animals, usually horses, on the packed, earthen threshing floors near the house. The Karakachani, a band of Wallachians from the village of Yakoruda in the Rhodope Mountains, brought about fifty horses to the village at threshingtime. A peasant paid the equivalent of a dollar a day for the service of a team. The grain was placed in the center of the floor, near a pole to which the animals were hitched. Around and around the pole the horses walked until the rope's length was used up, whereupon they reversed their direction. Much grain was threshed by the machine owned by some of the wealthier men of the village, which was beginning to supplant the old-fashioned threshing floors. Some of the families still winnowed the grain by tossing it in the face of a stiff breeze, but many others had access to a separating machine in the neighborhood.

But this *smes,* or wheat and rye mixture, was not the only crop raised. Quite a few of the homes had garden patches, either in the yard or on the edge of the village, where peppers, mealy potatoes, cabbages, and tomatoes were grown. The white beans from Dragalevtsy were said to be the best in this part of Bulgaria.

Some families grew sunflowers in order to sell the seeds for oil. Pumpkins from the cornfields were prized for use in a soggy pumpkin pie called *banitsa.* Fruit raising was decidedly underdeveloped, but the trees that were properly cared for produced very well. Straw for the animals was frequently borrowed or purchased from the wealthier peasants who had a surplus from the threshing.

The crop second in importance to *smes,* however, was corn. Of considerable interest were the groups of women who hoed the cornfield first in one direction, and a week later in a different direction. Varying in number from three to fifteen, these groups did

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more than merely chop weeds and loosen the soil; they also afforded an opportunity for visiting and conversation. A day or two ahead of time the woman needing help broached the matter to those whose assistance she wanted in her cornfield. She was careful to include only those women who would work in a congenial manner, shunning those known to be gossipy or quarrelsome. At four in the morning on the day of the hoeing the hostess had to go to the home of each guest.

"Anka, Anka," she called above the barking of the menacing dogs. Anka came to the door to greet her walking alarm clock with a cheery *"Dobro utro"* ("Good morning"). Since Anka owed the visitor two days of work for having helped with her cornfield, she readily accepted, hurried about her household tasks, and was ready to leave for the fields by six o'clock. Young women received many invitations because they could better withstand the summer heat. Occasionally, young men, upon hearing that their sweethearts were to be invited, asked the hostess the night before to call them along with the others in the morning. In the field all day long they had a wonderful opportunity to hoe next to the girls of their choice and "to tell secret things and to speak what they shouldn't."

Each woman brought her heavy, semicircular hoe and her own bread, but the hostess provided the vegetables and other food. Sometimes the people were paid in cash for their work, but more often the work was repaid in kind. The oldest maiden was "at the post." She apportioned the number of rows and kept the workers from getting in each other's way. She set the pace as the workers moved in a line, side by side, across the field. Her word was supreme, and even the hostess kept quiet, although she might think the girl was giving poor directions. The hostess watched the time and told the group when to stop working for the three meals she served. The girl "at the post" gave the signal to resume work, but she did not urge others to work until she saw that the group sentiment favored it. If one woman was not ready to start, the others began anyway. But the niceties of etiquette were always observed: the hostess, who was profiting from the work, invited the group to stop to eat; a guest, who was directing the group, rather than the hostess, suggested that they take up work once more.